

(Conflict) Communication Styles Information Sheet

These definitions come from the University of Kentucky Violence Intervention and Prevention Center. They are a way to assess different communication styles during conflict. We all probably use these behaviors in different situations. In some situations, it may be better to be more passive. Sometimes you may need more aggressive communication. It depends on the situation. But generally, assertive communication is going to be more productive for the types of conversations we are focused on here – farm/ranch transfers. Being aware of how you react or respond will lead to improved communication.

Passive communication is a style of avoiding expression of opinions or feelings, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs. As a result, passive individuals do not respond overtly to hurtful or anger-inducing situations. Instead, they allow grievances and annoyances to mount, usually unaware of the buildup. But once they have reached their high tolerance threshold for unacceptable behavior, they are prone to explosive outbursts, which are usually out of proportion to the triggering incident. After the outburst, however, they may feel shame, guilt, and confusion, so they return to being passive.

Aggressive communication is a style in which individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that interrupts the rights of others. They tend to not practice the listening skills we've been talking about and speak loudly and demand attention. They can be impulsive, interrupt others and be impatient. They may intimidate others through body language and use "you" statements – in a critical or blaming manner.

Passive-aggressive communication is a style in which individuals appear passive on the surface but are acting out anger in a subtle, indirect, or behind-the-scenes way. People who develop a pattern of passive-aggressive communication usually feel powerless, stuck, and resentful – in other words, they feel incapable of dealing directly with the object of their resentments. Instead, they express their anger by subtly undermining the object (real or imagined) of their resentments.

Assertive communication is a style in which individuals clearly state their opinions and feelings, and firmly advocate for their rights and needs without violating the rights of others. These individuals value themselves, their time, and their emotional, spiritual, and physical needs and are strong advocates for themselves while being very respectful of the rights of others.

Conflict Styles Summary

Passive	Aggressive	Passive - Aggressive	Assertive
Avoids conflict.	Criticizes, blames or attacks.	Says feelings under their breath – mutter.	States needs clearly and respectfully.
Fails to express needs.	Uses “you” statements.	Denies problems.	Uses “I” statements.
Uncomfortable with eye contact. Apologetic.	Impatient and easily frustrated.	Uses sarcasm.	Communicates respect.
Compiles emotions that can result in outbursts.	Not great listeners.	Appears cooperative, but seek to sabotage.	Feels connected to others and in control.

Sources:

University of Kentucky Violence Intervention and Prevention Center | <https://www.uky.edu/vipcenter/>
https://www.uky.edu/hr/sites/www.uky.edu.hr/files/wellness/images/Conf14_FourCommStyles.pdf